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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 KATHMANDU 000692

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SUBJECT: NEPAL'S CABINET MINISTERS - BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

REF: A. KATHMANDU 590

[B. KATHMANDU 562](#)

[C. KATHMANDU 522](#)

[D. KATHMANDU 437](#)

[1](#)1. (SBU) Following is biographic information about key ministers in the current Nepali cabinet. Biographic information about the Prime Minister was reported in Ref D.

Bijay Gachhadar, Deputy Prime Minister and Physical Planning and Works

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[1](#)2. (SBU) Bijay Kumar Gachhadar, of the Madhesi People's Rights Forum (MPRF), was appointed Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Physical Planning and Works -- the ministry he held in the Maoist-led government -- on June 4. Gachhadar's appointment put him into open conflict with MPRF chairman Upendra Yadav, who declared that Gachhadar and several of his supporters were expelled from the party. Gachhadar applied to register his faction as a separate party at the Election Commission. A decision on his application is pending. After leaving the Nepali Congress (NC) for the MPRF in March 2008, Gachhadar won both of the constituencies he contested (one each in Morang and Sunsari) in the CA election the following month. He was an NC member elected to Parliament in 1991, 1994, and 1999. During that period, he served as Minister for Communications (1991), Public Works and Transport (1995), Tourism and Civil Aviation (1999-2000), and Water Resources (July - October 2002). Gachhadar reportedly was very close to G.P. Koirala until Koirala denied him a ministerial portfolio in the cabinet he formed in December 1998. Gachhadar has militant political roots and reportedly remains involved in corruption. During his early affiliation with the NC, he was involved in a number of armed actions, including the 1972 hijacking of a Royal Nepal Airlines flight to India. He was implicated in a 1975 bomb attack on a police station in the eastern Terai district of Sunsari. Gachhadar was born in 1953 to a Tharu family in Sunsari. He holds a Master's degree in political science from Kathmandu's Tribhuvan University. He is married and has a daughter and two sons, one of whom is in the United States. His English is fair.

Sujata Koirala, Foreign Affairs

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13. (SBU) Sujata Koirala, the only child of NC president Girija Prasad Koirala, was appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs on June 4. She previously served as a Minister Without Portfolio in the cabinet of her father from January to August 2008. Koirala contested the CA election in April 2008 but lost to the chairman of the MPRF, Upendra Yadav. Koirala has been the head of the foreign relations department of the NC since October 2005. She was elected to the party's Central Committee in September 2005. She has been active in politics since her father first became prime minister in 1991. She also is the founding president of Sushma Koirala Memorial Trust, an NGO established in the name of her late mother. Koirala is a controversial figure both within and outside her party. NC members, frustrated with the stranglehold the Koirala family has over the party, question her political savvy and ability to be effective at the national level. Her name has been connected to a number of corruption scams, including one that involved a Royal Nepal Airlines contract in the early 1990s, but all allegations remain unproven. Koirala's detractors highlight that she repeatedly argued against uprooting the monarchy. She fled to India following the royal takeover in February 2005 and returned to Kathmandu after former King Gyanendra conceded power in April 2006. Koirala was born on September 25, 1954 in Biratnagar, Morang district in the eastern Terai. She completed a course in textile design in Delhi, India. Koirala is married to a German national and lived in Germany for many years until 1991. She has two adult children: a son, Siddhartha, and a daughter, Melanie. Koirala is a Brahmin. She speaks English fluently.

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Bhim Rawal, Home Affairs

14. (SBU) Bhim Bahadur Rawal was appointed Minister of Home Affairs on June 17. The Communist Party of Nepal - United Marxist Leninist (UML) Central Committee member was elected to the CA under the proportional representation system in April 2008. Rawal served as Minister of Tourism and Civil Aviation and of Science and Technology in 1998-99 and as the State Minister for Commerce, Tourism and Civil Aviation in 1994-95. He was elected to Parliament in 1994. He worked on election issues with the United Nations in Cambodia in 1992-93. Rawal was an adviser to Jhalanath Khanal -- now UML General Secretary -- while the latter served as a minister in the interim government of 1990-91. Rawal allied himself with M. K. Nepal when Nepal became General Secretary of the UML in 1993. Khanal, angered by the switch in allegiance, allegedly attempted to remove Rawal from his position as State Minister in 1994, but M. K. Nepal -- then Deputy Prime Minister -- reportedly protected Rawal. Rawal currently appears to enjoy good relations with both Khanal and the now Prime Minister. Rawal was born on December 15, 1955 in Achham district in the hills of far western Nepal. He holds an M.A. in political science and a bachelor's degree in law from Tribhuvan University. He was a practicing lawyer who worked on a number of legal literacy and assistance issues for the Nepal Bar Association in the late 1980s. He is married and has two sons. Rawal is a Chhetri. He speaks English fluently.

Bidhya Bhandari, Defense

15. (SBU) Bidhya Bhandari -- the widow of Madan Bhandari, who was UML general secretary from 1990 until his death in a car accident in 1993 -- was appointed Minister of Defense on May 125. She previously served as the Minister of Population and Environment from March to October 1997. Bhandari was elected one of three Vice Chairpersons of the UML in February 2009. Aligned with the Prime Minister's majority faction of the UML, she has been a Central Committee member of the party since February 2003 and was an alternate Central Committee member from 1998 to 2003. She began politics with the

Communist Party of Nepal - Marxist Leninist in 1978 and joined the UML after the restoration of multiparty democracy in 1990. She was elected to the lower house of Parliament from Kathmandu in a by-election in 1994 and was re-elected in the mid-term polls later that year. She was defeated in her contest in 2008 and is not a member of the CA. Bhandari was born on June 19, 1961. She holds a Bachelor's degree from an affiliate of Kathmandu's Tribhuvan University. She has two daughters. Bhandari is a Brahmin. Her English is poor.

Surendra Pandey, Finance  
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¶6. (SBU) Surendra Prasad Pandey, a close aide of UML chairman Jhalanath Khanal, was appointed Minister of Finance on May 25. Pandey was elected to the CA under the proportional representation system in April 2008 and was the deputy parliamentary party leader of the UML until he became a minister. He was elected to the UML's politburo in May ¶2009. Pandey previously served as a member of parliament from 1999 to June 2003. He joined politics at the age of 15 and spent 12 years underground during the Panchayat era. Born in 1958 in Dhading, a district adjoining Kathmandu, Pandey has a Master's degree in sociology and is a teacher by profession. He has authored several sociological books. Pandey is a Brahmin.

Umakant Chaudhari, Health and Population  
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¶7. (SBU) Umakant Chaudhari, a CA member from the central Terai district of Bara, joined the cabinet on June 4 and was appointed Minister of Health and Population on June 17. He served as an Assistant Minister of Agriculture and

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Cooperatives from July 2004 to January 2005. Chaudhari is an NC Central Committee member. He sided with the NC (Democratic) -- the faction of Sher Bahadur Deuba -- after the NC split in September 2002 (the party reunited in 2007). Chaudhari began his political career with the mainline NC in ¶1979. Prior to that, he served on the Central Committee of the NC-affiliated Nepal Students Union in the 1970s. Chaudhari was born on August 31, 1966 in Bara district. He holds a Master's degree in botany from Tribhuvan University and is an International Visitors Leadership Program alumnus. He is married and has a son and three daughters. Chaudhari is Tharu. His English is poor.

Rakam Chemjong, Peace and Reconstruction  
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¶8. (SBU) Rakam Chemjong, a UML Central Committee since February 2009, was appointed Minister of Peace and Reconstruction on June 17. Chemjong was first elected to the parliament in 1991 but is not a current CA member. He twice served as president of the Free Students Union, a multi-party student council, and is a founding member of the UML-affiliated All Nepal National Free Students Union. Chemjong was born in 1957 in the eastern Nepal district of Dhankuta and holds a B.Sc. from Tribhuvan University (1985). He is from the Rai community.

Prakash Sharan Mahat, Energy  
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¶9. (SBU) Prakash Sharan Mahat, an NC Central Committee member, joined the cabinet on June 4 and was appointed Minister of Energy on June 17. Mahat was nominated to the CA under the proportional representation system in April 2008. He previously served as State Minister of Foreign Affairs from July 2004 to January 2005 and as an advisor for then-Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba from July 2001 to October 2002. A former General Secretary of the NC-affiliated Nepal Students Union (1984-88), Mahat has long been active in the party and was imprisoned several times before 1990 during

the struggle for democracy. Mahat was born in November 1959 in Nuwakot, a district to the north of Kathmandu. He was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship in 1990 and holds a Ph.D. in economics from Southern Illinois University (1997). He is married and has two children. His older brother, Ram Sharan Mahat, was the Finance Minister in several NC governments. Prakash Mahat is Chhetri. His English is excellent.

Comment

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¶10. (SBU) Home Minister Bhim Rawal is a close Embassy contact and an experienced leader well-placed to oversee the police services. After a series of disappointing Home Ministers, including the combative Bamdev Gautam in Pushpa Dahal's government and the feckless Krishna Sitaula in G.P. Koirala's government, we view Rawal as a welcome change. Prakash Mahat is also a close Embassy contact. Post knows pro-American Sujata Koirala well but has doubts about her effectiveness. Despite the mixed bag of ministers, all eight of the above are in their 40s and 50s -- quite young by Nepalese political standards.

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